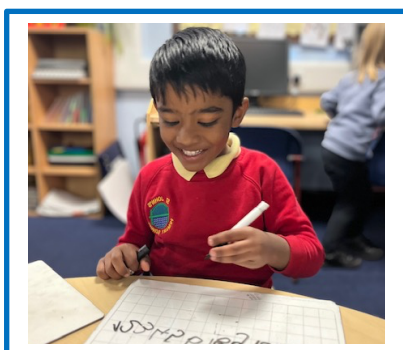
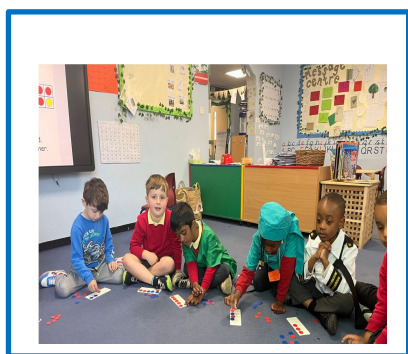


# Welcome to Early Years St John's Primary School



**Your child's start date:**

We are looking forward to seeing

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on \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_

Starting full-time Reception class is an exciting milestone for both children and their families. It marks the beginning of a new journey into the world of learning, exploration, and growth within a structured school environment. This important transition helps children develop key social, emotional, and academic skills while building confidence and independence. In Reception, children are supported in a nurturing and engaging setting where play-based learning helps them make sense of the world around them. As they settle into their new routine, they begin to form friendships, develop curiosity, and lay the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.

Where possible we encourage all children to stay all day from their initial start date. There may be situations where this is not always appropriate.

We realise that this may seem a long day, however we firmly believe that the children benefit from this strong start to Reception. It allows them to build friendships, learn routines and structures as well as getting to know the staff in Reception Class.

### **School hours:**

School times for reception children are:

Monday	8:55-3.25
Tuesday	8:55-3.25
Wednesday	8:55-3.25
Thursday	8:55-3.25
Friday	8:55-3.25

### **Rational:**

At St John's, we are committed to providing the highest quality care and education for all our children, laying a strong foundation for their future learning. We strive to create a safe, happy, and stimulating environment filled with motivating and enjoyable experiences that encourage children to become confident, independent learners. We value every individual child and work in close partnership with parents and other professionals to meet each child's needs and help them achieve their full potential.

### **Seesaw:**

Seesaw is an interactive app designed to support and enhance your child's learning. It enables us to work closely with parents and carers by sharing updates, observations, and examples of children's play and learning both in the setting and at home.

Through Seesaw, staff can assign tasks and provide written or verbal feedback. Some activities are completed in class, while reception-aged children may occasionally be asked to complete simple tasks at home.

Parents and carers are provided with secure login details to access their child's learning journal. We strongly encourage families to engage with Seesaw regularly—reviewing posts with your child, discussing their school experiences, and even contributing your own comments or posts. Your involvement helps strengthen the home-school learning connection and supports your child's development.

### **Class Dojo:**

Class Dojo is a communication platform that helps strengthen the connection between school and home by linking teachers, children, and parents. At St John's, we use Class Dojo to share important messages, reminders, and invitations to events, helping families stay informed and involved in school life. It is a valuable tool for keeping parents and carers updated on day-to-day information. We encourage families to regularly check the app to ensure they don't miss any key updates or opportunities to engage with the school community. We also use it to support behaviour and praise, an online reward system.

### **Uniform:**

Our school uniform consists of a red sweatshirt, a yellow polo shirt, and either black or grey trousers or a skirt. Please keep in mind that the children will often be involved in messy play—such as painting, using playdough, or gluing—so it's important they wear clothes that allow them to fully take part without the worry of ruining anything special.

**Shoes** – We kindly ask for your support with footwear. If possible, please send your child in shoes with Velcro fastenings or buckles. This not only promotes independence and self-help skills but also makes things much easier for staff. Children feel more confident when they've had lots of opportunities at home to practise putting on and taking off their own clothes and shoes.

We also ask that children bring a spare set of clothes that can be left in school in case of accidents. A suitable waterproof coat and wellies are essential, as we spend a lot of time outdoors in all weather conditions—including during Forest School sessions.

As the seasons change, we'll ask for additional items: hats and gloves in the colder months, and sun hats and sun cream in the summer.

**Please ensure that *all* clothing and personal items are clearly named. If clothing is mis-placed, there is a lost property box in Early Years' yard. Feel free to check for missing items.**

### **Early Years Curriculum:**

Children learn best through play. Play is the "work" of childhood, laying essential foundations for future learning. It is the main medium through which children engage with the Early Years Curriculum. Although it may appear simple, play is a serious and complex activity that requires concentration, perseverance, and both mental and physical effort from children.

Young children learn through hands-on experiences. They need opportunities to look, touch, smell, listen, taste, and explore using a wide range of materials. Within our setting, all children are supported to develop at their own pace. Through developmentally appropriate activities and guided adult support, the curriculum helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepares them to transition confidently to the National Curriculum.

The **Characteristics of Effective Learning**, along with the **Prime** and **Specific Areas of Learning and Development**, are deeply interconnected. The ways in which children engage with others and with their environment—through playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking

critically—form the foundation for all learning. These characteristics support children in becoming motivated, resilient, and effective learners.

### **Prime Areas:**

#### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:**

We view this area as paramount. Within a secure and stimulating environment, children are supported to develop self-esteem and the confidence to work, cooperate, and build relationships with others outside their family.

Children are encouraged to:

- Make and express choices
- Demonstrate independence in selecting activities and resources
- Explore new learning
- Take responsibility for their actions and personal needs
- Use initiative and reasoning to solve problems
- Develop perseverance to engage in increasingly complex play, both independently and collaboratively
- Learn how to care for their bodies, including using the toilet, dressing themselves, and brushing their teeth independently

Our approach to social development includes guiding children through conflict resolution. They are supported in verbalising their feelings, recognising others' needs, and working toward mutually acceptable solutions. Through stories, role-play, adult modelling, and discussion, children begin to understand concepts of right and wrong, empathy, kindness, honesty, and respect for people, property, and the environment.

#### **Communication and Language**

Children are supported to develop their vocabulary, fluency, and listening skills through stories, songs, rhymes, and meaningful conversations. They:

- Talk about their experiences
- Plan and evaluate their activities
- Participate in discussions, both one-on-one and in groups
- Develop early phonics through adult-led group work

Role-play offers valuable opportunities to practise language in different social contexts, encouraging them to adapt their speech to different roles and situations. They also learn to listen to each other and collaborate effectively.

#### **Physical Development**

Children are given access to a range of large and small equipment, both indoors and outdoors, to build physical confidence and skill. Adult support ensures safe exploration and development of:

- Gross motor skills (climbing, balancing, running)
- Fine motor skills (using pencils, brushes, scissors, small objects)
- Manual dexterity (through play with construction toys, clay, dough, etc.)

These activities develop coordination, control, and strength, preparing children for tasks such as writing.

### **Specific Areas of Learning**

#### **Writing**

In a print-rich environment, children learn the power and purpose of writing for communication and self-expression. They are encouraged to:

- Engage in mark-making and emergent writing
- Use a variety of tools (crayons, pencils, paints, etc.)
- Write for real-life contexts (e.g., shopping lists, letters, notes)

Children are supported in transferring spoken language into written form, with adults scribing for them when necessary. As their skills grow, they begin forming letters and writing with greater independence. A cohesive handwriting style is introduced from the start and practised in various sensory-rich ways—using sand, paint, whiteboards, and air-writing. This style is continued throughout school.

#### **Reading:**

Children are encouraged to love and respect books. Daily shared reading sessions include:

- Picture books, fairy tales, factual texts, and poetry
- Discussions to enhance understanding
- Activities that develop print awareness and phonemic awareness

We also run a **Take Home Library** once a week, allowing children to borrow books to share with their families. This fosters a love of stories and promotes family reading time. We also use the school library and will be making regular trips to Benwell library as well.

To support early reading, we use:

- **Playing with Sounds:** Focused on developing listening skills, sound discrimination, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and oral blending/segmenting
- **Fisher Family Trust:** A structured phonics programme that builds confident readers and writers – this is taught daily from September.
- **Talk for Writing:** Encourages storytelling and verbal composition before writing

### **Mathematics:**

Mathematical thinking is woven throughout the Early Years curriculum. Through play and hands-on activities, children explore:

- There are daily maths sessions taught early in September.
- Sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing, and patterning
- Counting everyday objects and recognising numerals
- Concepts of shape, size, position, and quantity

They develop problem-solving skills and mathematical language through games, puzzles, songs, rhymes, and real-life tasks like snack preparation or tidying up.

### **Understanding the World:**

Children explore and make sense of their environment through a wide range of natural and man-made materials. They are encouraged to:

- Ask questions, make observations, and record findings
- Compare, classify, and talk about change and patterns
- Learn about their community, families, and traditions
- Care for living things in the garden or through animal visits

They engage in creative problem-solving by planning and constructing with various materials and tools. ICT is also introduced through the use of iPads and PCs, where children explore painting, early literacy, and numeracy apps.

Cooking is included regularly, allowing children to safely experience food preparation—stirring, chopping, mixing, and observing scientific changes like baking and freezing.

### **Expressive Arts and Design:**

Children express themselves through a variety of sensory experiences and media. Opportunities include:

- Painting, collage, drawing, and model making
- Music, dance, storytelling, and imaginative role-play
- Exploring colour, texture, shape, and form

**Mantle of the Expert** sessions provide structured drama opportunities where children take on expert roles within imagined contexts. This approach inspires purposeful learning across the curriculum. It is a really fun and engaging way to learn, children are the experts, learning to prioritise and problem solve.

### **Forest School:**

Over the course of the academic year, all children will participate in **Forest School** sessions. A timetable will be displayed on the classroom window indicating group allocations.

Forest School provides outdoor learning experiences in a woodland setting, helping children build:

- Self-confidence and independence
- Teamwork and communication skills
- Curiosity and care for the natural world

Children take part in a range of guided and self-chosen activities such as:

- Tree and bird identification
- Fire lighting
- Using tools
- Exploring and getting muddy!

Forest School encourages children to take risks, reflect on their learning, and build resilience. It's a fun and enriching experience for both children and adults.

**Clothing:** All children must wear weather-appropriate clothing. The school provides waterproof jackets, trousers, and high-visibility vests. Long sleeves and trousers are required for protection, and wellies should be worn on wet days. Sun hats are needed in hot weather. If you have any other questions that are unanswered in this booklet, please feel free to contact the Early Years Lead,

Mrs Branson at [Roberta.branson@stjohns.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:Roberta.branson@stjohns.newcastle.sch.uk)

Or

Miss Shaw at [miranda.shaw@stjohns.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:miranda.shaw@stjohns.newcastle.sch.uk)